

I *Observations made in the Island of Ceilan, by Mr Strachan on the ways of catching Fowl and Deer, of Serpents, of the ant bear and of Cinamon.*

THe way they catch Water-Fowls is this, in Loughs and Waters which are not very deep, the Fowler puts an Earthen Pot upon his Head, in which Pot are bored holes, through which he may see, then he wadeth in the Water, nothing being seen but the Pot which covereth his Head, and thus enters in the midst of all the Fowls, they thinking it to be a Block or the like driving, do not take notice of it, although it be upon their side; then he takes hold of one by his Foot, and draws him under Water, and wrings his Neck about; the rest of the Fowls not perceiving this fit still, then he goes to the next Fowl and does the same; and so going forth he catches as many as he pleases.

Those that have Guns, make a Frame, which they cover with green Branches, which are so broad as to cover their whole Body. They stand behind it: then carrying the Frame before him, the Bird or Deer seeing nothing but the green Branches is not affrighted, and thus the Hunter being advanced near enough, gives fire.

It is wonderful to consider, how some Beasts are affrighted by Fire, as Lyons, Tygers, Wild Swine, and other Beasts; and as the *Ceilanefes* chase the Elephants, Wild Swine and Tygers from their Plantations by Fire, and the Natives at the *Cape of Good Hope* chase the Lyons from their Catcol; so also do the *Ceilanefes* catch Harts, Deers, Elks, and Hares, which they perform in this manner. In time of the night two Men go into the Wood, one of these takes an Earthen Vessel upon his Head, wherein is Fire burning, made of Sticks and a kind of Refine, and in one hand

hand he carries a Staff, whereon are fastned 8 Bells, which the more harmonious they are, so much the better, the other Man goes behind with a Spear in his hand ; whenever the Deer perceiveth the Light and hears the Bells, he draws near to it, standing and beholding it as amazed, for he sees not the Men ; in the mean time the Man with the Spear pierceth his Body, and catches him. Now Elephants, Tygers, Serpents and Wild Swine run when they see the Fire, so that the Hunters need not fear them.

There are two sorts of Serpents that Capt. *Knox* does not mention, which are thought not to be venomous, and a *Ceilanese* will not kill ; the first is of a Bluish colour, and comes frequently into Houses, and searches for Rats only, and eats them ; he creeps into their Nests, and makes a destruction among them ; he is of the thickness of an inch and a half diameter, and about two yards and a half long.

The other is green like a Leaf of a Tree, who winds himself, and climbs upon the Trees, and catches the Birds, lying still all the time as if he had no motion, until he sees a fit opportunity to catch. He is about one half inch diameter, and a yard long.

The *Talgori* will lye as if he were dead beside these little Nests which are built by these Ants called *Waia*, letting his Tongue stick out as far as he can ; these Ants will immediately fix themselves in great numbers round about and upon his Tongue, to carry away the slime which is upon the Tongue, thus he draws in his Tongue and swallows them, and then he shoots forth his Tongue again, and continues so to do until he has satisfied his hunger.

If a Man be lying or sleeping an Elephant will not mind him. A Company of *Dutch* Souldiers marching from *Columbo* to *Gurbewil*, one of them did stay behind to rest himself, and did slumber upon the way side. An Elephant coming out of the Woods, went (within two paces of him)
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but when he was pass'd by about 7 or 8 paces, the Soldier did awake and see the Elephant, and not thinking it safe to run, because the Elephant did not mind him, lay still until he perceived the Elephant to be gone.

There are two sorts of Cinnamon-Trees, of which the Tree which is esteemed the best has a Leaf much larger and thicker than the other, but otherwise no difference is perceived. If these Leaves, as well one sort as the other, be distilled, they yield an Oyl and Water, as if Cloves had been in the Still.

Upon the Root of this Tree is a thick Bark, which, when it is distilled, as the former, yields Oyl and Camphire also; which is separated by covering the Receiver with a Linnen Cloath, and the Camphire will remain in the Cloath in a lump together, and the Oyl and Water will run into the Receiver. This Camphire has the same colour, the same dissolving, dissolving and healing Balsamick quality of the Camphire of *Japan*; the Oyl is of the same vertue; anointed upon Scabs, Itch and Excoriations, it cures them in a short time.

To drink the Water among common Water cures Fluxes, and does good to those who are under that languishing Disease called by the *Hollanders* the *Lands Disease*, and by the *Ceilanese*, *Pipa*; of which we shall make mention at large in its proper place.

I never did see the Natives make use of Cinnamon, although they scarcely have a meal without Pepper: neither is it used by the *Europeans* either in Meat, or distilled among the Rack, or infused in Drink, for it is thought that it occasions shortness of Breath; but this I have no experience of; whither this be the cause of it, or whither the *Ceilanese* are fearful to bring it to particular men, seeing the *Hollanders* have severe Laws against the selling of it, I cannot tell.